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Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 11 July 1995 at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. GERVAIS (Côte d'Ivoire)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION (continued)

Discussion with representatives of field offices

The CHAIRPERSON introduced the representatives of field offices invited to participate in the discussion: Ms. Awori, Resident Coordinator of the United Nations Development Programme in Zimbabwe, Mr. Rahman, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) representative in China and Mongolia, Mr. Arkutu, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) representative in Nigeria, and Mr. Jones, World Food Programme (WFP) representative in Ethiopia.

Ms. AWORI (United Nations Development Programme) said that the Government of Zimbabwe had agreed to the establishment of a country strategy note, which it considered as an effective instrument for achieving more effective management of the development assistance provided by United Nations agencies. The Government, which was engaged in preparing the third five-year development plan, considered that the note should be focused on the priority sectors brought to light during the review of the second five-year plan. Some of those sectors were appropriate areas for assistance from United Nations agencies, but the leading role played by the Government should not be sacrificed for the sake of expediency. The importance of coordination should not be underestimated, even though it was simplified considerably when a Government was in control of a situation and defined national priorities clearly. Coordination mechanisms had been put in place, for example monthly inter-agency meetings, thematic working groups, joint training in relation to HIV/AIDS and an inter-agency work plan. Examples of the programme approach were the Action Plan for AIDS, the National Family Planning Programme and the Poverty Alleviation Action Plan, all of which offered the various United Nations agencies, the World Bank, NGOs, bilateral organizations and the Government an opportunity to work together in programme formulation and implementation.

The lack of adequate resources often made planning difficult or gave rise to programme cuts. Not all agencies were authorized by headquarters to pay their full share of the cost of joint training or other activities. Owing

to the continuous decline in development assistance funding, activities had been scaled down, projects left in abeyance and competition among the agencies intensified.

Mr. ARKUTU (United Nations Population Fund) said that he was encouraged by the interest generated in the system of resident coordinators and the desire to strengthen it. Although much still remained to be done to harmonize programmes and procedures and use resources more efficiently a great deal had already been achieved in a very short space of time and progress would continue to accelerate. The example of Viet Nam, considered at the previous meeting, remarkable though it was, was not unique. Other examples of cooperation between United Nations bodies, or between the United Nations and other donors, were provided by Nigeria, Ghana and the United Republic of Tanzania. Such cooperation would have been unthinkable five years earlier. It had undoubtedly been facilitated by the relevant Economic and Social Council and General Assembly resolutions, the coordination guidelines adopted by other bodies and the personal relations established between the representatives of the different agencies, but above all the unequivocal commitment of their governing bodies. However, efforts at coordination were hampered by financial obstacles, the lack of staff resources necessary to achieve decentralization and representation on the ground and the diversity of procedures, rules and operating styles.

While the idea of the country strategy note had given rise to a variety of reactions among countries despite the efforts made by UNDP and other organizations to promote it, the priority accorded to it depended on the national situation and external factors, which at times made any kind of long-term planning difficult.

Mr. RAHMAN (United Nations Children's Fund) said that in China UNICEF actively supported cooperation among the different United Nations agencies. The development assistance which the agencies provided for China was very small in comparison to national development outlays, and there was therefore every reason to increase its knock-on effect by coordinating programmes and activities. The implementation of General Assembly resolution 47/199 and the strengthening of the Resident Coordination System had enabled great progress to be made in programme coordination, as evidenced by three examples. Firstly, China was the country most seriously affected

by Iodine Deficiency Disorder, with 40 per cent of the population at risk. In 1993, in cooperation with the World Bank, UNDP, UNICEF and WHO had held a high-level advocacy meeting which established a plan of action to eliminate the deficiency by the year 2000 and prompted a decision to iodize all edible salt by 1996. The iodization project had been supported by a $27 million loan from the World Bank and technical assistance from UNDP, UNIDO and UNICEF. UNDP, UNIDO and WHO also assisted the Ministry of Health in implementing the plan of action. Secondly, UNICEF, WHO and the Rotary Club, as well as various other donors, were helping the Chinese Government to achieve its aim of eradicating poliomyelitis by the end of 1995 through the twice-yearly organization of National Immunization Days, the provision of vaccines and training of health workers. Thirdly, in connection with the World Summit for Social Development, the Government had launched a huge poverty eradication programme for 80 million people living in abject poverty. Under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator, the member agencies of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy were therefore developing a model programme of poverty eradication in certain regions of the country, with each agency implementing programme activities falling within its competence. The experience gained from the project would be fed into national policy for the eradication of poverty.

Similar progress had been made in the implementation of the operational aspects of General Assembly resolution 47/199. While the preparation of a country strategy note was still under consideration, the Resident Coordinator, in consultation with all the agencies, had drafted an internal document on China's priorities and the support received from the United Nations system with regard to economic and social development. Ten thematic working groups had also been set up under the leadership of various agencies to discuss government policy, facilitate the coordination of development aid and harmonize the organization's programme cycles with China's Ninth Five-Year Plan.

Mr. JONES (World Food Programme) said that the international community's activities in Ethiopia were largely devoted to food aid, about a quarter of which was provided by WFP. In the absence of a country strategy note, the Programme had its own strategy which formed part of an overall national policy for disaster prevention and control. United Nations agencies

worked well in Ethiopia, in particular when dealing with the chronic food shortage to which the country was subjected. UNDP, UNICEF, FAO, UNHCR and WFP held monthly meetings with donors, NGOs and Government representatives. Since the coordination mechanisms worked so well, the food crisis which Ethiopia had undergone in 1994 had been of a totally different order from that experienced in 1984. In future it would be necessary to retain those mechanisms despite the increasing shortfall in resources.

Ms. ALBRECTSEN (Denmark), addressing the representatives present, asked firstly for their view of the questionnaire which had been used to collect information for the three-yearly review of operational activities for development. In their opinion, which particular subjects should be included in the review? Did the field representatives think that more power and authority had been delegated to them, as requested by the General Assembly, and if so, how did they make use of it? Thirdly, did they consider that the guidelines and interpretations given with regard to the programme approach, national implementation, resident coordinators and country strategy notes were sufficient, or were they in need of improvement on the occasion of the three-yearly review? Finally, the UNDP and UNFPA governing bodies had decided to assess how the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) operated both at headquarters and on the ground. Had the representatives been able to form an idea of the Fund's activities on the ground, and could they indicate the particular aspects which, in their opinion, should be taken into consideration as part of the assessment?

Mr. DLAMINI (Observer for Swaziland), addressing the UNICEF representative, said that the Fund's Resident Coordinator in his country had done excellent work in respecting local cultural traditions, to which the population was very attached. UNICEF's decision to transfer the official in question, at a time when he had just launched a very important programme with the University of Swaziland, was, in the opinion of the country's authorities, extremely regrettable. He wished to know what criteria the Fund followed in reassigning its field representatives and, in that connection, to what extent it took account of the programmes under way in different countries.

With regard to WFP, which did very useful work in developing countries, in particular when such countries were faced with inflows of refugees, he wondered whether, in conjunction with its interventions in emergency

situations, the Programme could not help countries, in particular Swaziland, to define a strategy enabling them to increase their food production sufficiently so as to be able, in the future, to avoid shortages and arrange for the transfer of agricultural and food production techniques which they needed.

Turning to the role of UNDP, he said that in countries where resident coordinators served, they must adopt as neutral a stance as possible, refrain from disseminating all forms of foreign ideology and not interfere in local politics. Of course, sound management of public affairs was essential, but resident coordinators could not replace national authorities in establishing priorities for assistance programmes. It was the task of sovereign Governments to take that kind of decision.

Mr. PAES SABOIA (Brazil) expressed regret that the United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies operating in Latin America were not represented among the participants in the debate. Given the particular implementation methods of the United Nations agencies' programmes in the region, where for example there was a very large number of cost-sharing agreements and where NGOs were often closely involved in project implementation, it would have been interesting for staff members of the United Nations agencies serving in Latin American countries to provide the Council with details of their experience.

The problem of coordination existed on two levels: within United Nations agencies and in the Government. However, the Government was not a single entity. Responsibilities were shared between various ministries, and often also between the central administration and local communities. In order to guarantee the required level of coordination, it therefore seemed essential for the Government to entrust a specific body with the task of serving as an intermediary with the different United Nations agencies. He wished to know the opinion of the representatives of United Nations programmes, funds and specialized agencies on the matter and, in particular, whether resident coordinators had already assisted Governments in setting up coordinating bodies of that kind.

Ms. AWORI (United Nations Development Programme), responding firstly to the question asked by the representative of Denmark, said that during the forthcoming three-yearly reviews, it would perhaps be necessary to

try to obtain more information from users themselves, and in particular to ask the Governments to give their opinion on coordination between the different United Nations agencies.

Turning to the question raised by the Brazilian delegation, she said that in Zimbabwe each agency was in contact with the competent ministry, and that all the ministries reported to a ministry responsible for the coordination of aid programmes. It was very important for the representatives of United Nations agencies at country level to work in close cooperation with the technical ministries. In their role as team leaders, resident coordinators became involved above all when problems arose between the United Nations agencies and the technical ministries or the ministry responsible for coordination.

The new guidelines for drawing up country strategy notes, which field staff had helped to prepare, were more concise and more user-friendly than the previous ones, and entirely satisfactory. The same was true of the guidelines covering the programme approach.

With regard to UNIFEM, she pointed out that given the extent of needs and the limited resources available for dealing with them, the Fund, whose Regional Office for southern Africa and eastern Africa was in Zimbabwe, faced a difficult task. At all events, UNIFEM was considered to be an extremely reliable organization and UNDP frequently made use of its services for all issues concerned with the productive role of women.

Mr. ARKUTU (United Nations Population Fund), responding to the question asked by the Danish delegation on the transfer of decision-making powers to field offices, said that the decentralization process launched by UNFPA about five years earlier was already very well advanced, since 80 per cent of all projects were currently approved by field offices. However, that process, in addition to the development of the national implementation approach, increased the offices' workload considerably. The need to strengthen their capacity was therefore becoming urgent.

The transfer of decision-making powers followed precise rules, and a series of safeguards and checks had been planned in order to avoid irregularities and ensure that the programmes approved and implemented by the field offices were in keeping with the decisions taken by the Executive Board.

Thus, all programme accounts were audited during the implementation phase. The results of the decentralization process were thus far extremely positive.

With regard to the coordination of aid programmes by Governments, he pointed out that although UNFPA programmes and projects were developed with the competent technical ministries, the agreements relating to their implementation were always concluded with the body responsible for coordination, i.e. in most cases the planning ministry. Furthermore, all the meetings held to review progress made on the projects and the implementation of country programmes were chaired by a representative of the ministry responsible for coordination, which was thus regularly informed of the requests made to UNFPA by the other ministries and all the activities conducted on the ground.

Mr. RAHMAN (United Nations Children's Fund), referring to the transfer of the Fund's representative serving in Swaziland, said he was certain that the authorities at headquarters had taken good note of the concerns expressed by the country's representative.

The methods used for the inquiry into operational activities and their coordination had proved to be satisfactory. The questionnaire sent to staff away from headquarters had enabled a fairly general but reliable store of information to be collected. However, it was regrettable that it had not been possible to test the questionnaire by sending it firstly to a sample of field offices from different agencies which could have made suggestions regarding possible improvements.

As regards UNIFEM, he could only say that the Fund had recently opened an office in China and that he himself was cooperating very actively with the UNIFEM representative in China as part of the preparations for the World Conference on Women to be held in Beijing.

With regard to the coordination of aid programmes by Governments, the procedure was as described by the UNFPA representative. Although programming and planning activities for the different projects were conducted in cooperation with the competent ministries, there was always a Government ministry responsible for coordinating all aid programmes and ensuring that such programmes were compatible. In China, for example, such matters were dealt with by the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation.

Mr. JONES (World Food Programme), responding briefly to the question raised by the representative of Swaziland on the forms of aid which the Programme could provide for his country, said that WFP intervened above all in cases of serious shortages and emergencies in order to guarantee adequate food supplies to the most destitute who were threatened by famine. However, it also endeavoured to assist countries outside periods of crisis by undertaking different projects designed to promote job creation, stockpiling of food reserves and so on.

Mr. MACHIN (United Kingdom) noted that despite undoubted progress, much still remained to be done to achieve the best possible coordination of operational activities for development conducted by United Nations agencies. He wished to know what, in the opinion of the representatives of the specialized agencies, programmes and funds participating in the discussion, the main obstacles were to the strengthening of coordination and what they considered to be the most effective measures for its rapid improvement.

Mr. FETZER (Germany) pointed out that follow-up and evaluation activities were extremely important so as to be able to judge the effectiveness of the programmes and projects implemented at country level and assess their contribution to the national development process; they must not only enable observations to be made, but above all lessons to be learnt from the experience gained and improvements to be made with the benefit of hindsight, to the activities conducted in support of development. He wished to know whether, in the opinion of the representatives of the specialized agencies, programmes and funds participating in the discussion, the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in place were satisfactory or whether they believed it was necessary to improve them and, where appropriate, what the most urgent reforms necessary were in that regard.

Ms. VOLKOFF (Canada) wondered whether the United Nations agencies had made every effort to harmonize not only their programming cycles but also their ways of handling country programme reviews, and whether their representatives in the field had sought to standardize the procedures that were to be followed in that respect, the diversity of which was certainly a source of confusion for Governments.

She also wished to know whether in the countries where they were posted the participants had had occasion, when there was a particularly important

problem that called for a decision from headquarters, to join forces with their counterparts from other organizations and make joint representations to their respective headquarters, so that those representations would carry greater weight.

Mr. TALIKAWU (Uganda) said that the establishment of the country strategy note system was a cumbersome process to set in motion, especially for the least developed countries. That was why those countries had for the most part still not made it one of their priorities. He asked whether the lack of a country strategy note was likely to be a factor that would limit injections of aid from the United Nations system; if so, could the UNDP Resident Coordinator perhaps help to compensate by means of a country strategy outline?

The principle of national implementation produced excellent results on the ground, but a lack of domestic capacity limited the opportunities for national authorities to take charge of programmes and projects. How did resident coordinators intend to solve the problem, especially in the least developed countries, at a time when the programme approach was to become more generally used?

Ms. AWORI (United Nations Development Programme) said in answer to the representative of the United Kingdom that resident coordinators enjoyed fairly wide freedom of action and did not suffer excessively from constraints imposed by headquarters. But decentralization would clearly be more fruitful, and resident coordinators would be able to take quicker decisions if available resources enabled them to be given broader financial autonomy.

In response to the representative of Germany, she said that in Zimbabwe monitoring and evaluation had not so far been given the attention they deserved. UNDP was currently doing what it could to remedy that shortcoming. For that purpose it needed reliable basic data and had embarked on gathering the desired information. Likewise, UNDP had still not attached sufficient importance to periodic reviews of the Zimbabwe country programme. But preparations for the interim review were well under way, and it had been agreed that in that context all agencies working in Zimbabwe would turn their attention to the country programme.

Sometimes the United Nations agencies approached their headquarters as a team. However, each agency conducted its own programming, since it managed its own resources. That was where the country strategy note should be most

useful because it would mean that it was possible to take an overall view of the tasks to be undertaken. It was also where budget reductions risked seriously undermining the credit of the United Nations system as a whole.

Mr. JONES (World Food Programme) said the WFP was only just beginning to operate the programme approach, and the corresponding mechanism would not be in place before 1996. It was still too soon to say whether it would produce positive results for an agency such as WFP.

In Ethiopia the situation had required the organizations present on the ground to get together and deal collectively with headquarters. The disaster management team set up by WFP had been given the task of collectively briefing donors, the rest of the international community and headquarters.

Mr. ARKUTU (United Nations Population Fund) pointed out to the representative of Germany that it was difficult to monitor and evaluate the global effect of development assistance programmes. UNFPA might not have found the perfect method, but it relied on the directives received and systematically applied the monitoring mechanisms specified at country level, in the shape of tripartite reviews, annual meetings with certain other agencies operating on the ground, evaluations conducted in the country itself and in-depth evaluations at headquarters. Various independent evaluations were also conducted from time to time. UNFPA was therefore kept continuously informed of the results obtained.

He explained to the representative of Uganda, who had referred to the paucity of resources available to some countries to adopt fully the principle of national implementation, that UNFPA was engaged in enhancing the capacities of countries by in-country training and also by organizing out-of-country training; it also operated intercountry training.

UNFPA took care to harmonize its action with that of the various other aid organizations, such as UNICEF, by carefully studying the basic documents in which they set out their own programmes.

Mr. RAHMAN (United Nations Children's Fund), replying to the representative of the United Kingdom, said that coordination at country level had improved considerably in the past 12 years or so. Progress had been such that it might even be necessary to exercise caution lest the concern for coordination turn into an obsession and end up reducing the activities of the Resident Coordinator to a state of paralysis. He suggested that it might be

worth defining the minimum desirable level of coordination. Ways of strengthening the United Nations development system would henceforth involve the recruitment of talented individuals rather than coordination. As for ways of improving coordination with the specialized agencies, it was for the Council to pinpoint them.

Replying to the delegation of Canada, he said that a periodic review of the country programme for China had been conducted in 1993, before the new programming cycle had begun. All agencies operating on the ground had taken part in it, and the exchanges had been very fruitful.

He told the representative of Germany that UNICEF was systematically and regularly carrying out monitoring and evaluation exercises to gauge the effects of its programmes, the scope and objectives of which were defined in a very precise manner. The investigations and assessments were undertaken at various levels, with evaluations being made of each project and programme. UNICEF had continuous access to information on the results of its activities.

The crucial problem remained that ever greater demands were made on the aid agencies, but they had fewer and fewer resources at their disposal to meet those demands.

Ms. AWORI (United Nations Development Programme) said in reply to the representative of Uganda that in Zimbabwe UNDP had been at pains to ensure that the adoption of the principle of national implementation did not put an excessive burden on the national authorities. UNDP currently favoured broader application of that principle through its adoption by donors.

In her capacity as a Resident Coordinator, she had become accustomed to taking on many coordination tasks. Her heaviest responsibility was that of fund-raising.

Mr. CONTINI (France) observed that at the previous meeting the Resident Coordinator in Cambodia had said that UNDP publications were distributed in Viet Nam in Vietnamese and English. He wished to remind UNDP representatives on the ground of the need to respect the multilingualism of the United Nations.

He asked how resident coordinators, in determining priorities, were applying the decisions of the UNDP Governing Council and whether or not they took account of the new methods of action which had been adopted, and also how they were negotiating with Governments to ensure that the directives were

applied. He also asked Ms. Awori how, once the next programming cycle was in operation, she was going to be able to allocate 20 per cent of resources for national implementation in Zimbabwe.

Ms. ROUCHET (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said that the types of coordination and collaboration to be found on the ground were very varied. While UNESCO had no permanent representation in Viet Nam, it had undertaken a sectoral analysis there in collaboration with UNDP on the subject of education and human resources. It was employing 80 Vietnamese in that work, and confined itself to the role of a background player in support of the Government of Viet Nam. The key factor as she saw it was to ensure that there was complementarity of activities. It was that issue of permanent interaction which the Council would benefit from going into more thoroughly.

Mr. BRUN (Norway) noted that some field representatives had not replied to the question asked by the representative of the United Kingdom about the constraints that hampered cooperation. Did they consider that the principal obstacles were due to insufficient decentralization and the absence of guidelines?

The General Assembly had authorized the UNDP resident coordinators to play the leading role in emergency situations. Had that role been defined with sufficient clarity? Were the instructions given to the resident coordinators on reporting lines clear enough?

Mr. OJIMBA (Nigeria) considered that it would be a mistake to entrust cooperation and coordination on the ground exclusively to a single institution. In his opinion coordination was automatic once the institutions in question were assured of being given sufficient resources to operate.

Mr. SHIBATA (Japan) said that to judge from the replies that had been given, great progress had been made in the area of coordination, and lack of resources would appear to be the only obstacle. He would like to know whether coordination, both within the United Nations system and with the World Bank, the other donors and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), was as satisfactory in the other countries as it seemed to be in Viet Nam, and whether the United Nations agencies were participating in the meetings of consultative bodies. He also asked in what way the United Nations system might be more closely associated with drawing up structural adjustment

programmes, with a view in particular to making sure that there was a social safety net to mitigate their adverse consequences. According to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the World Food Programme would henceforth be dealing more with emergency aid operations than with food security. What would then happen to the necessary continuity between emergency operations and development?

Mr. ARKUTU (United Nations Population Fund) said he had not wished to give the impression that everything to do with coordination was operating perfectly, but he had emphasized that progress was being made more rapidly than had been envisaged, even if it varied from country to country. The lack of resources was clearly not the only obstacle to coordination at country level; there were others relating in particular to the degree of decentralization on the ground and the diversity of the procedures being followed by the different organizations. The way UNFPA operated was very different from that of UNICEF or WFP, and that gave rise to some constraints; for example, in Nigeria UNICEF had four regional offices in addition to its main office in Lagos, and each one was bigger than the one UNFPA office. So the Resident Coordinator could not participate in all the meetings on the various different matters.

Participation by United Nations agencies in meetings of consultative bodies had recently increased, especially in the case of Viet Nam, but it was important not to lose sight of the fact that the United Nations system had also played a major role in coordinating assistance in the past, especially in Zimbabwe or Namibia when those countries had gained their independence. As for the participation of United Nations agencies in the formulation of structural adjustment programmes, such programmes gave rise to highly technical discussions that were enveloped in a degree of mystery and hardly lent themselves to participation of that kind.

Mr. JONES (World Food Programme) said that as far as WFP was concerned the introduction of programming should mean that the matter of insufficient decentralization noted by the representative of Norway could be remedied. However, the key question was not decentralization of administration and personnel management but decentralization of the power to use resources with flexibility.

Normally the Resident Coordinator saw to the management of humanitarian aid, and that principle was accepted by all agencies. The Resident Coordinator, moreover, represented the Department of Humanitarian Affairs when DHA had no local office. However, the situation was more complicated in cases where there were transboundary problems such as in Pakistan, from where the situation in Afghanistan was handled. Matters also had to be clarified when the Secretary-General appointed a special representative.

Contrary to what the representative of Japan had understood, WFP continued to have as its mission efforts to support economic and social development through food aid, even if emphasis seemed to be placed increasingly on emergency operations. The Government of Ethiopia had arrived at the conclusion that the provision of food for work in food deficit areas enabled emergency situations to be addressed while at the same time ensuring recovery and development, and therefore fitted into a continuum.

Ms. AWORI (United Nations Development Programme) said she intended to present to the Government of Zimbabwe the new programming system recently adopted by the UNDP Executive Board, and would take note of its reaction. Being still very busy with the end of the fifth programming cycle, she was not yet in a position to reply to the question put by the representative of France.

UNDP was very closely associated with structural adjustment processes, which in general it preferred to call reform processes. In Zimbabwe UNDP was supporting the Government's programme of economic reforms and was involved in a number of projects. It was also encouraging the Government to demonstrate greater openness when structural adjustment measures or economic reforms were being drawn up, in other words not to confine itself to discussing them with the international financial institutions but to ensure the involvement of the population, who in the final analysis would bear the burden. It was not the role of the United Nations system to follow behind the financial institutions and set in place social safety nets. At present the Regional Office for Africa was preparing the resident coordinators to take part in the consultative group meetings.

Mr. LEENSTRA (Netherlands), noting that in Zimbabwe the UNDP Resident Coordinator was devoting much of her time to mobilizing funds, wanted to know in detail the kind of difficulties she was encountering. While she

was not supposed to be engaged in selling, the quality of the work that was done and the effectiveness of the programmes nevertheless constituted a powerful argument to attract funds. It would be worth knowing how the United Nations agencies were demonstrating their usefulness at the country level, and how their role could be made more visible by pinpointing the areas in which they were indispensable.

Mr. KELLOWAY (Australia) wanted to return to the subjects of monitoring and evaluation. There was a need to determine the global impact of the activities carried out by the United Nations system, in other words to find out whether the activities that were implemented on the ground were successful. It was not merely a matter of drawing lessons from projects in order to apply them to the planning of new operations; rather, it was the actual value of the action taken by the United Nations on the ground. In terms simply of the volume of the resources committed, the United Nations system was dwarfed by the World Bank in most countries, and in some it was dwarfed by bilateral organizations. Consequently, he would like to hear reports from representatives of field offices on their experience in the various countries.

Mr. JONES (World Food Programme), replying to the representative of Australia, recalled that almost 1 million people had died of hunger in Ethiopia in 1984. At the beginning of 1994 some 7 million Ethiopians had been once again threatened by famine, but by the end of that year the Government was stating that the famine had been averted, although there had been several thousand victims. The United Nations system had played an important role in achieving that outcome.

Mr. ARKUTU (United Nations Population Fund) said that some 15 years previously only two countries in sub-Saharan Africa had had an official population policy; that figure was now 80 per cent, and gave some idea of UNFPA's influence. There had also been a considerable increase in awareness in sub-Saharan Africa of the relationship between population and development issues. That was not solely due to the activities of the Fund, but it had played a prominent role in encouraging such awareness and helping countries to draw up and implement programmes to solve their population problems, taking account of their own situations and priorities.

Ms. AWORI (United Nations Development Programme) said that in order to measure how successful its activities had been UNDP endeavoured to determine the extent to which it was assisting governmental and other national entities to focus on a critical problem and then to apply themselves to solving it. In Zimbabwe, for example, the Government was implementing a wide-ranging programme in the area of the environment and another on the management of water resources, but it had at first neglected the question of water storage; UNDP was therefore doing everything it could to make the Government aware of the problem, drawing up an action plan which would deal with it and then getting other donors interested, because it did not have the resources necessary to finance the plan completely. The extent to which UNDP managed to attract other donors was another criterion for evaluating its success.

Mr. RAHMAN (United Nations Children's Fund) said that the question asked by the representative of Australia was both interesting and complex, since it involved the question of evaluating actions above and beyond the immediate impact of programmes and considering the influence a given agency had at country level. UNICEF's contribution in China, where a fifth of the world's children were living, was minimal in absolute value, but the Fund's activities there were noteworthy. UNICEF had succeeded in persuading the Government to launch a national programme for children to the year 2000, which set out very clear objectives. UNICEF had also encouraged the adoption of legislative measures to give effect to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Many other multilateral bodies, including the World Bank, approached UNICEF for technical assistance, advice or support for their programmes. UNICEF's modest pilot projects were sometimes the basis for larger-scale projects, as had been the case with a maternal and child health project which the World Bank had extended to eight Chinese provinces, or the elementary and primary education programme which had been launched in collaboration with UNESCO and which the World Bank had extended into seven provinces. Finally, UNICEF had access to those responsible for drawing up policies, and it was consulted on matters concerning children. Its influence was therefore far from being negligible, bearing in mind the relative modesty of its contribution.

Mr. KELLOWAY (Australia) said it was clear from the replies which had been given that the real value of the activities carried out by the United Nations system had little to do with the size of the financial contributions, and that it was therefore necessary to acquire more information about the nature of actual contributions at country level and the precise content of the activities implemented by the various organizations. The figures were always relative and had to be put in perspective; the examples that had been cited were not without interest, but the question should be studied in much greater depth.

Mr. PAES SABOIA (Brazil) added that it was also necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of bilateral cooperation. It was possible to find out what was happening in one's own country on the bilateral level, but in other countries it was more problematic. In the United Nations system everyone had his say, and that was not the case in the bilateral context; there was much to be done to improve both multilateral and bilateral cooperation.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.